

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: March 21, 2011

Reviewed by: BP

**SUBJECT:** Authorization for Street Closure and Waiver of Planning Fees for the Albany Community Farmer's Market

**REPORT BY:** Jeff Bond, Planning & Building Manager  
Nicole Almaguer, Environmental Specialist

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council authorize:

1. Closure of the 1000 block of Solano Avenue (1025 -1060 Solano Avenue) from May – October 2011 each Wednesday of the week from 2pm – 8pm for the Albany Community Farmer's Market,
2. Waiver of fees for the processing of the application for a conditional use permit

**BACKGROUND**

The City's Climate Action Plan, adopted by City Council in April 2010, calls for establishment of an Albany Farmer's Market to strengthen the regional food system and serve as a community resource.

With the involvement of community representatives, the City issued a Request for Proposals to establish an Albany Farmers Market in June 2010 and selected the Ecology Center from the proposals received. City staff has been working with the Ecology Center, a local nonprofit, to locate and develop a farmers market customized to the Albany. The Ecology Center has been operating local farmers markets since 1987, providing a significant amount of expertise in how to establishing and conducting a sustainable market that has these features:

- Zero waste event – including reusable bags
- Predominately organic, local produce and goods
- Inclusion of Albany vendors and coordination with restaurants
- Informational/educational programs
- Support programs including Electronic Benefits Transfer System (EBT), WIC Farmers'
- Market Nutrition and the Senior Nutrition Program

A number of potential sites for the farmers market were evaluated in recent months. Site considerations included central location, adequate size, good visibility, avoiding interruption to truck routes and public transit, ability to close off streets without blocking access to residences or off street parking, pedestrian access, avoiding damage to landscaped parks, etc. In addition, the Ecology Center determined the day of the market based on availability of vendors and timing of other nearby markets.

## **DISCUSSION**

The proposed site selected for the market is the 1000 block of Solano Avenue, west of San Pablo Avenue. The market would be seasonal, held between May – October, on Wednesdays from 3pm-7pm . The market would be comprised of approximately 20 vendor booths. If approved, the intended “grand opening” is scheduled for May 4, 2011.

The Ecology Center has met with all businesses on the 1000 block of Solano to discuss the proposed site, and received support for the event. In developing the event concept, staff and the Ecology Center worked with merchants, the Solano Avenue Association, and the Chamber of Commerce regarding location options that help add to Solano and San Pablo Avenue. Correspondence has been received from a business one block to the west expressing concern about the impact of the market on operation of their business. The Ecology Center has expressed a willingness to work with this business and others to address impacts of the market.

The Ecology Center has also worked with the City’s Sustainability Committee, who has expressed strong support for establishment of the market. Additionally, a public meeting was held on December 7, 2010 to discuss the proposed event, and support for the market was expressed by attendees.

The proposed street closure is for the 1000 block of Solano Avenue (1025-1060 Solano Avenue). Barricades would be used to block off this street section, prohibiting turns onto the block from San Pablo Avenue and Adams Street. San Pablo Avenue and Adams Street would remain open to thru traffic. A traffic control plan has been developed by the Ecology Center, which identifies how traffic throughout the area would be managed. The Ecology Center staff would be responsible for placing and retrieving all barricades and detour signage. It should be noted that the Ecology Center currently oversees three farmers markets within the City of Berkeley, and has a significant amount of experience with road closures.

Given the market’s central location in the City, it is hoped that many customers will walk or bike to the market. Nonetheless, arrangements are being made with nearby commercial parking lots to make parking areas available to market patrons. In addition, vendors will park vehicles within the market at designated booths to allow ease of unloading and service of goods.

An encroachment permit was issued by Caltrans on January 19, 2011. The City’s Traffic and Safety Commission reviewed the traffic control plan during their January 21, 2011

meeting, and expressed support for the event. The Traffic and Safety Commission has asked that additional detour signage be utilized at key intersections to provide advanced notice to drivers regarding the road closure. The Ecology Center is aware of this request and is prepared to accommodate the additional signage.

The City's Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed and approved the conditional use permit application at their February 23, 2011 meeting, with an amendment to the conditions of approval to allow for unamplified musical instruments to be played during the event.

Monitoring of the market will be conducted throughout the season (May-October) to determine whether accommodations need to be made should any issues arise. Additionally, a review of the market will be conducted following completion of the first season.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT**

The proposed event is called for within the City's Climate Action plan as a way to encourage localization of food and goods. Additionally, the overarching goal is to develop a market that attracts shoppers to the commercial sector, while also fostering community building.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The city's master fee schedule sets the cost of an application for a conditional use permit at \$1,784. This fee covers the cost of staff time associated with meeting with applicants and interested parties, preparation and mailing of public notices, preparation of staff reports, and other costs associated with Planning and Zoning Commission meetings. The Planning and Zoning Code establishes that only the City Council may waive or lower fees. In this situation staff believes the waiver of the cost of the conditional use permit is an appropriate action given that this project is a City initiative being implemented by a local non-profit organization.

In addition to waiving fees, staff time will be needed to conduct monitoring throughout the market season, and staff may monitor event set-up for the first few markets. In addition, the Police Department may need to increase patrols during the event due to the street closure.

### **Attachments**

1. Planning & Zoning Commission Conditions of Approval
2. Ecology Center Overview & Traffic Control Plan
3. Correspondence from Traffic and Safety Commission
4. Other Correspondence